

## Message Text

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12  
ACTION SS-25

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R 240651Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN  
TO SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC 3398  
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI UAE  
USINT BAGHDAD IRAQ  
AMEMBASSY DOHA QATAR  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA SAUDI ARABIA  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT KUWAIT  
AMEMBASSY LONDON UK  
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT OMAN  
AMEMBASSY SANA YEMEN ARAB REPUBLIC  
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IRAN

S E C R E T MANAMA 1223 SECTION 1 OF 2

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS     : MASS, PFOR, QA, BA, KU, TC, BA, IR, US, SA  
SUBJECT   : LOWER GULF ARMS POLICY: IT SEEMS TO US IT MORE  
           OR LESS WORKS

REFS     : (A) DOHA 863 (B) TEHRAN 8443 (C) KUWAIT 4008

1. SUMMARY: QUESTION: IN A SUBREGION COMPOSED OF AFFLUENT BUT  
ARMY-LESS MINI-STATES IN A REGION POTENTIALLY DOMINATED BY IRAN  
AND SAUDI ARABIA, HOW SHOULD THE USG HANDLE INCREASING REQUESTS  
FOR MILITARY SALES AND TRAINING? ANSWER: MUDDLE ON WITH AD HOC  
REACTIONS TO AD HOC REQUESTS, CONTINUE TO SAY NO TO REQUESTS WHICH  
DO NOT SEEM "REASONABLE" TO US, AND PROMOTE TRAINING IN THE U.S.  
END SUMMARY.

2. REALIZING THAT THERE ARE GREAT DIFFERENCES, REAL AS WELL AS  
SELF-PERCEIVED, BETWEEN THE MINI-STATES OF THE PERSIAN GULF, IT  
NEVERTHELESS IS USEFUL WE THINK TO EXCLUDE KUWAIT, IRAQ AND OMAN  
FROM CONSIDERATION OF THE QUESTION RAISED BY DOHA REFTTEL, RECOGNIZING  
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ALL THE WHILE THAT THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE STATES INVOLVED CERTAINLY  
DO NOT EXCLUDE THOSE THREE STATES FROM THEIR OWN THINKING ON  
THIS QUESTION. THAT LEAVES THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, QATAR AND  
BAHRAIN. ALL THREE UNTIL RELATIVELY RECENTLY WERE ARMY-LESS AND

AIR-FORCELESS TO ANY IMPORTANT DEGREE. PARTICULARLY, WE GATHER, HERE IN BAHRAIN, BUT ALSO TO A SIGNIFICANT DEGREE IN QATAR AND THE UAE, WE ARE FACED WITH SITUATIONS WHERE GOVERNMENTS ARE AT VARIOUS STAGES OF CREATING MILITARY FORCES, CAPABLE BOTH OF DEFENSIVE AND OFFENSIVE TASKS, OUT OF ESSENTIALLY INTERNAL SECURITY UNITS WHICH HISTORICALLY GREW OUT OF THE LOCAL POLICE FORCES. THUS WE ARE WITNESSING (AND PARTICIPATING IN) NOT ONLY A CHANGE IN SOURCE OF EQUIPMENT AND ADVICE/TRAINING (I.E., AWAY FROM THE UK), BUT ALSO A QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE CHANGE IN TERMS OF "MISSION" AND CAPABILITY OF THE FORCES CONCERNED.

3. THE THREE STATES FACE NO SERIOUS MILITARY THREATS FROM THE OUTSIDE EXCEPT, UNDER SOME CIRCUMSTANCES, EACH OTHER. THEY ARE EACH SHAIKHLY GOVERNMENTS WITH WHICH THE USG WANTS TO MAINTAIN CURRENTLY EXISTING REASONABLY WARM RELATIONS. THEY HAVE MONEY TO PAY FOR THE ARMS THEY WANT (OR, IN THE CASE OF BAHRAIN, THINK THEY CAN GET REGIONAL NEIGHBORS OR THE USG TO PAY FOR THEM). THE MINISTRIES OF DEFENSE ARE HEADED BY PROMINENT YOUNGER MEMBERS OF THE RULING FAMILIES OF EACH OF THE STATES, OFTEN AS NOT BY THE MEN WHO ARE DESIGNATED, FORMALLY OR INFORMALLY, AS THE HEIRS APPARENT. I.E., WE MIGHT BE DEALING WITH THEM AS HEADS OF STATE TOMORROW MORNING. THEY FUNCTION AS HEADS OF ESSENTIALLY NON-EXISTENT ARMIES IN A REGION INCREASINGLY AWASH IN ARMS, MOSTLY FROM THE USG BUT ALSO FROM EUROPEAN AND NOW POSSIBLY SOVIET SOURCES. THEIR EXPATRIATE ADVISORS ARE OFTEN JORDANIAN AND PAKISTANI, MOST WITH US BIASES AND EXPERIENCE.

4. THE USG, MOST OBSERVERS AGREE, HAS A STAKE IN MAINTAINING INTERNAL SECURITY OF THE THREE STATES INVOLVED, IN THE INTERESTS OF REGIONAL STABILITY AND SECURITY, AIMED AT PROMOTING CONDITIONS IN WHICH PETROLEUM CONTINUES TO FLOW TO USG AND ITS ALLIES. IN PRACTICE, USG INTEREST IN STABILITY HAS BEEN DEMONSTRATED DIPLOMATICALLY BY ESTABLISHMENT OF RESIDENT EMBASSIES WHICH REGULARLY CLUCK AND COO ABOUT REGIONAL SECURITY AND COOPERATION, FORTUNATELY ECHOING THE PUBLIC POSITIONS OF THE HOST GOVERNMENTS. BOTH FORMALLY AND INFORMALLY THE USG PROMOTES SAUDI ARABIAN AND, TO A MUCH LESSER EXTENT, IRANIAN ACTIVISM VIS-A-VIS THE THREE STATES  
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-- IN ROLES AS BIG BROTHERS -- MEDIATORS, SOURCES OF ADVICE AND EXPERTISE AND, IN THE CASE OF BAHRAIN, FINANCE. THIS PROMOTION OF THE REGIONAL BIG BROTHERS REINFORCES THE NATURAL TENDENCIES IN THE REGION -- BOTH OF THOSE STATES SEEK IN VARIOUS WAYS TO EXPRESS THEIR ROLES (CERTAINLY SELF-PERCEIVED AND TO A LARGE EXTENT SHARED IN THE STATES IN QUESTION) AS REGIONAL POWERS.

5. RESIDENT AMERICAN EMBASSIES HAVE ALSO, WE THINK LARGELY SUCCESSFULLY, STRIVEN TO EXPAND COMMERCIAL, TECHNICAL AND EDUCATIONAL BILATERAL RELATIONS. WHERE THE US EMBASSIES HAVE BEEN NOTABLY INACTIVE OR UNRESPONSIVE, UNTIL THE PAST YEAR, HAS BEEN ON THE MILITARY SIDE -- THIS IN DISTINCT AND LOCALLY VERY NOTICEABLE CONTRAST TO THE USG ROLE IN THE REGION GENERALLY.

6. WE HAVE HAD A LOWER GULF ARMS POLICY, WHICH BECAUSE OF THE SPECIAL INSURGENCY SITUATION IN OMAN, HAS BEEN LIMITED IN APPLICATION TO UAE, QATAR AND BAHRAIN (KUWAIT IS APPARENTLY UPPER GULF). IN PURSUIT OF THIS POLICY, THE USG HAS REFUSED TO SELL TO THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE THREE STATES, ARMAMENTS SEEN (BY US) TO BE OFFENSIVE IN APPLICATION, AS CONTRASTED TO THOSE SEEN (BY US) TO BE DEFENSIVE. THE REQUESTS FOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING (ON THE LATTER, WE'VE GENERALLY BEEN FORTHCOMING) HAVE IN THE PAST BEEN SPORADIC AND IN SOME CASES, NOTABLY THE BAHRAINI, LUDICROUS. RECENTLY, HOWEVER, THE REQUESTS ARE BOTH MORE URGENT, MORE SPECIFIC, AND LESS OUTLANDISH. THE STATES ARE BECOMING SOMEWHAT MORE SOPHISTICATED IN PLAYING OFF THE EUROPEAN AND U.S. SUPPLIERS AGAINST EACH OTHER ALTHOUGH ONLY KUWAIT (EXCLUDING IRAQ FROM CONSIDERATION) HAS HAD THE POLITICAL NERVE AND MANEUVERABILITY TO INTRODUCE THE SOVIETS INTO THE SUPPLY GAME. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE RUSSIAN BEAR IS ABOUT TO APPEAR IN THE LOWER GULF, VIA ARMS SALES, BUT ARAB BARGAINERS ARE NOT UNAWARE OF THE LEVERAGE SUCH A POSSIBILITY GIVES THEM, IDEOLOGY NOTWITHSTANDING. IN THAT REGARD, THE RECENT JORDANIAN SUCCESS VIS-A-VIS BOTH THE USG AND SAUDI ARABIA HAS NOT GONE UNNOTICED. THIS IS A KIND OF LEVERAGE THEY HAVE NOT IN THE PAST

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R 240651Z AUG 76  
FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN  
TO SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC 3399  
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI UAE  
USINT BAGHDAD IRAQ  
AMEMBASSY DOHA QATAR  
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ENJOYED AS THEIR ARMS UNIVERSE WAS SEEN TO BE LIMITED TO BRITISH, FRENCH AND GERMAN IN ADDITION TO AMERICAN SOURCES.

7. WHAT TO DO? IT SEEMS CLEAR, AT LEAST AT THE LOCAL LEVEL,

THAT OUR BRITISH AND FRENCH ALLIES ARE WILLING -- REALLY ANXIOUS -- TO SELL VIRTUALLY ANYTHING THAT CAN BE PAID FOR (WHICH DOESN'T EXCLUDE MUCH). THEY DON'T SEEM TO HAVE AN ARMS POLICY WHICH IS DISTINGUISHABLE FROM THEIR GENERAL COMMERCIAL POLICY: MAXIMIZE SALES. THE OTHER MAJOR SOURCE, THE SOVIET, IS NOT AN IMMEDIATE SOURCE OF SUPPLY, BUT THAT POSSIBILITY PROMISES TO BE AN INCREASINGLY RELEVANT CONSIDERATION, PARTICULARLY IF KUWAIT GOES AHEAD WITH ITS ANNOUNCED PURCHASE PLANS.

8. CONTRARY TO WHAT SOME CONGRESSIONAL AND OTHER CRITICS THINK, THE USG HAS THUS HAD AN ARMS POLICY IN THE LOWER GULF (WE WON'T ADDRESS THE REGIONAL QUESTION) WHICH HAS HAD THE PRACTICAL EFFECT OF THE USG DECLINING ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS TO BECOME INVOLVED IN SEVERAL POSSIBLE SALES. IN THE BAHRAIN CASE, THIS HAS INCLUDED REQUESTS FOR TOW, REDEYE, HAWK, ETC. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE, SECRET

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IN THAT REGARD, THAT IN CONTRAST TO THE COMMON WISDOM ARGUMENT THAT IF WE DON'T SELL SOMEBODY ELSE WILL, THAT AT LEAST AS REGARDS BAHRAIN, THEY HAVE NOT YET BOUGHT SIMILAR ITEMS FROM OTHER SOURCES. THERE ARE SEVERAL POSSIBLE INTERPRETATIONS OF THIS FACT -- THAT THE REQUESTS, WHETHER FORMAL OR INFORMAL, WERE NOT DEEPLY SERIOUS; THAT THE DESIRE FOR AMERICAN EQUIPMENT WAS SO GREAT THAT IN ITS ABSENCE, THE BAHRAINIS WERE WILLING TO WAIT; THAT THE QUESTION WHICH WAS BEING ASKED WAS WHETHER THE USG WOULD PAY FOR THE EQUIPMENT, ETC. BE THAT AS IT MAY, THE REALITY IS THAT THE ARMS WEREN'T BOUGHT. NOR HAS SAUDI ARABIA YET BOUGHT THEM MUCH. THIS LEADS TO THE RADICAL THOUGHT THAT THERE MAY BE SOME MERIT IN CONTINUING THE POLICY OF DECLINING TO AGREE TO SELL ARMS WHEN WE SERIOUSLY QUESTION THE "THREAT" AND WHEN WE QUESTION THE "MISSION".

9. ON THE OTHER HAND, LET'S SELL THOSE ITEMS (AS THE RECENT DECISIONS TO SELL CERTAIN TYPES OF HELICOPTERS TO ABU DHABI AND POSSIBLY TO BAHRAIN) WHICH SEEM "REASONABLE". REASONABLE IN THE SENSE THAT THEY ARE MORE OR LESS DEFENSIVE AND INTERNAL SECURITY-ORIENTED IN NATURE (THOUGH THEY CAN BE RETRO-FITTED WITH SEVERAL TYPES OF "OFFENSIVE" WEAPONRY). TRAINING AND MAINTENANCE OF THESE ITEMS WILL KEEP THE YOUNG MEN IN THE DEFENSE FORCES -- AND HOPEFULLY THE SHAIKHLI MINISTERS AS WELL -- ENGAGED FOR SOME YEARS. IF WE CONTINUE TO PROMOTE -- OR AT LEAST BE RESPONSIVE TO REQUESTS FOR -- TRAINING IN THE U.S., THAT MAKES GOOD MACHIEVELLIAN SENSE TOO, SINCE THE NEWLY-TRAINED WILL PRESUMABLY HAVE STAKES IN AMERICAN MODELS AND WILL CONSTITUTE AN IN-HOUSE LOBBY ORIENTED TO U.S. GOODS.

10. AS FOR THE USG PROMOTING THE REGIONAL ROLES OF IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA (THE SPECIFIC QUESTION POSED IN THE DOHA REFTTEL), OUR VIEW WOULD BE THAT OF COURSE THIS IS A REASONABLE POLICY TO CONTINUE TO PURSUE, BUT NOT WITH MUCH EXPECTATION THAT IT WOULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE THAN IT HAS BEEN IN THE RECENT PAST. THE SAUDI PERFORMANCE IN THIS ROLE SURELY

HAS BEEN LESS THAN IMPRESSIVE: IRREGULAR, OFTEN SPASMODIC, ATTEMPTS WHICH DO NOT APPEAR TO HAVE MUCH CONSISTENCY. IRAN HAS HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL LIABILITIES (AS VIEWED FROM HERE) WHICH TEND TO INHIBIT ITS LEADERSHIP ROLE. IN ADDITION, WHILE FITTING THE MILITARY AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS OF THE THREE STATES INTO THE REGIONAL (AND MIDDLE EASTERN) PUZZLE IS SOMETHING WE HAVE TO  
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CONTINUE TO TRY TO DO, IT SEEMS TO US THAT WE WILL WANT TO CONTINUE TO HAVE STRONG BILATERAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THESE MATTERS AS WELL. FIRST OF ALL, BECAUSE THERE WILL BE CASES AND TIMES WHEN WE JUDGE NEITHER THE SAUDI NOR IRANIAN POSITIONS SOUND (IN US INTERESTS TERMS) AND SECONDLY, THERE MAY BE LOCAL SITUATIONS (AS WITH THE CASE OF THE QUESTION OF THE STATUS OF MIDEASTFOR IN BAHRAIN) WHEREIN WE WOULD HAVE A GREATER CHANCE OF SUCCESS (IN US INTERESTS TERMS) IN DIRECT BILATERAL DEALINGS RATHER THAN THROUGH THE REGIONAL MULTILATERAL, CONSENSUS METHOD. WE ALSO SENSE A SERIOUS, IF ONLY INTERMITTENTLY EXPRESSED, DESIRE -- ON THE PART OF THE THREE STATES -- NOT TO BECOME OVERLY DEPENDENT ON SAUDI ARABIA AND CERTAINLY NOT ON IRAN.

BURLEIGH

SECRET

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JIDDA SAUDI ARABIA  
KUWAIT KUWAIT  
LONDON UK

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